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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON PRESIDENT BUSH'S REMARKS AT THE
NATIONL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY (NED).

NEA/PPD FOR MQUINN, JKINCANNON, TROBERTS

1. SUMMARY: U.S. President George W. Bush's remarks at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) on November 6th have been mentioned in government, opposition and independent papers. The opposition and independent papers, some of which are anti-American, published excerpts of the speech. Most papers carried commentary focusing primarily on "the US bias to Israel" which many papers believe is responsible for a growing anti-U.S. sentiment in the region. Yemeni organizers of an international human rights/democracy conference set for January 4 (to be funded and jointly sponsored by the E.U.) are citing the speech as an important boost for their efforts (see reftel).END SUMMARY.

2. Under the title "U.S. President calls for political reforms in the region and lauds the multi party system in Yemen," Al-Thawra official daily (11/07) published a front-page report covering Bush's remarks on democracy for the Middle East.

3. "Al-Thawra" of 11/08 cited reactions to the speech in Jordan, Egypt and Iran all indicating that the main reason for the growing anti-US sentiments in the Arab region is "the total U.S. bias toward Israel."

4. "Al-Thawra" published on November 11 an op-ed article indicating that Bush's remarks were not very much welcomed by the Arabs "and were received by suspicion especially with regard to his remarks on freedom and democracy in the Arab world." The paper added that the US credibility will be assessed based on its policies toward Israel. "All the Arabs bear no hatred toward the American people but toward the US political bias to Israel which made all Arabs and Muslims very suspicious of the U.S. policies in the region." Al-Thawra added that: "If the U.S. wants its policies to gain acceptance and support in the Arab world it has to take one single step which is to force Israel to withdraw from occupied Palestine and to comply with Security Council resolutions and peace accords." "Only then" Al-Thawra added "Arabs will give a round of applause to President Bush's speech" al-Thawra concluded.

5. "Al-Shura", weekly of the Popular Forces Union, (November 9) published an op-ed titled "Bush markets democracy to the region" commenting specifically on Bush's remarks regarding the multi party system in Yemen. Al-Shura indicated that "the US's growing interest in Yemen in the context of democracy confirms that the U.S. wants to use Yemen as a regional center to implement its strategy that failed in Iraq."

6. "Annas" independent weekly (11/10) published an op-ed article saying that Bush has revealed in his speech "the US's bad intentions toward Syria and Iran." The article indicated that "the proposed U.S. democratic reforms for the region cannot yet be implemented in countries that still hold political prisoners, unfair elections and high poverty rates." The article rejected Bush's remarks "since the White House is as much corrupt as the Arab Regimes are."

7. Without commenting on the content, "Al-Sahwa" weekly (11/13, mouthpiece of the Yemeni Congregation for Reform - Islah) published a major part of the speech.

8. "Ra'ay" weekly (mouthpiece of the Rabita party) published excerpts of the speech highlighting Bush's remarks on democracy for the Middle East as stated in the speech such as: "the United States has adopted a new policy: a forward strategy of freedom in the Middle East that requires the same persistence and energy and idealism we have shown before ... and it will yield the same results." The paper criticized the speech for ignoring "the Israeli practices against the Palestinians."
MISENHEIMER